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Diana T Fritz 02/06/2007 11:52:23 AM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

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SIPDIS
TELEGRAM

August 11, 2004

To: No Action Addressee
Action: Unknown
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 2678 - ROUTINE)
TAGS: OIIP, PREL, KPAO, KMDR
Captions: None
Subject: UNITED ARAB EMIRATE YOUTH DON'T TRUST WESTERN NEWS
Ref: None

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 02678

SIPDIS
CXABU:
ACTION: PAO
INFO: ECON DCM POL AMB
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ACTION: PAO

DISSEMINATION: PAO
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: PA:HMEDELSON
DRAFTED: PA:TRWHATLEY
CLEARED: PA:KURBAHN, ECON:OJOHN, POL:SRADDANT

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RR RUEHC RUENAAA RUEKJCS ALNEA RUEHLO RUEHFR
RHRMDAB RUCJACC RUCQSOC
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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5460
RUENAAA/SECNAV WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
ALNEA/ALL NEAR EAST COLLECTIVE
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0826
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0863
RHRMDAB/COMUSNAVCENT
RUCJACC/USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA//
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 002678

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP; NEA/PPD; NEA/RA; INR/R/MR; PA;
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#) [TC](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: UNITED ARAB EMIRATE YOUTH DON'T TRUST WESTERN NEWS

1. Summary: A July 2004 survey by Public Affairs Office
Abu Dhabi of 535 Arab youth in the UAE, age 18-25,

determined that the majority use television as their primary source of news. The survey also determined that among television stations, Arabic channels such as Al Jazeera and Abu Dhabi TV are watched on a regular basis and are considered credible sources of news. Western stations such as CNN, BBC and Al Hurra were given low credibility ratings and are rarely watched, even among those who speak English. Survey participants rated a station's credibility by a combination of low government interference, presenting a variety of viewpoints, and the station sharing common assumptions and perspectives with their viewers. End summary.

¶2. The Public Affairs Office of Embassy Abu Dhabi recently undertook a non-representative poll of local youth attitudes towards media and news sources. As part of university research, a State Department Summer Intern designed a written questionnaire that he then distributed to 535 Emirati youth, mostly from the UAE University. While not scientific, the poll allows certain inferences to be drawn about the larger youth population in general. 407 of the national respondents came from the UAE University; the other respondents of mixed nationality were approached at local shopping malls. There was fair geographical (home Emirate) and gender distribution (63% female). 82% of the respondents had English ability. 10% of the respondents were non-students. The two respondent groups, UAEU students and other local youth, held nearly identical opinions as born out by statistical comparison.

Television as Primary News Source

¶3. The survey discovered that 69% of survey respondents count television and 22% count newspaper as their primary source of news. The three most popular television stations were Abu Dhabi TV (65% watching "regularly" or "sometimes"), Al Jazeera (52%), and Al Arabiya (38%). CNN (14%), BBC News (12%), and Al Hurra (11%) were consistently watched "hardly ever" or "never."

Link Between Credibility and Frequency

¶4. From discussions with survey participants, most identified credibility as the determining factor in how often a news channel is watched. Survey results confirm this relationship, as the credibility ratings when compared with frequency ratings indicate a direct relationship between the two. Arab news is both watched far more and considered more credible than Western news outlets CNN, BBC News, and Al Hurra. Even among survey respondents who understand English as well as Arabic, 81% consider Arabic-language news more credible.

¶5. CNN and BBC News received an average credibility ranking slightly above "low credibility," while Al Hurra had the lowest rating of all the stations. Compared with Al Jazeera and Abu Dhabi TV, which both rated "fair" in credibility, the Western networks do not have the trust of many Arab viewers.

Defining Credibility

¶6. Survey participants were asked in interviews to define how news outlets were evaluated on the basis of credibility and what constituted reporting the truth. Besides the importance of media that is free from the influence of government political agendas and a balanced perspective that attempts to report differing opinions, many survey participants expressed the idea that sharing a common perspective with the media on a given subject created credibility. For instance, most considered the use of the Arabic term shahid "martyr" as more credible and appropriate

than the Western use of "suicide bombers".

Comment

¶7. In addition to statistics, the survey offered good insight into why many Arab youth do not trust certain news stations as credible sources. In recent conversations with representatives from Al Arabiya television, this phenomena was confirmed when they commented that the station lost many viewers when they stopped using the term "shahid" in their editorials to describe Palestinian suicide operations. The station received many angry calls and letters accusing the station of abandoning the Palestinian cause. It is clear that Arab viewers prefer television free from government interference that is allowed to show a free flow of ideas and opinions. In addition, and perhaps just as important, they, like people everywhere, tend to gravitate toward news that conforms to their commonly held assumptions.

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